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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000071

SIPDIS

STATE PASS NSC FOR BOBBY PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL PM EPEP ECON KDEM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: CANADIAN TO HELP IGALI FOUNDATION OPEN
BAYELSA SCHOOL

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Canadian expatriate Mary Ellen Havlik (protect throughout), former Security officer for the Canadian Embassy in Nigeria on leave from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and currently Executive Director of the Daniel Igali Foundation,) told Pol-Econ Chief on January 31 that her principal task will be to turn the Igali Foundation-funded school near Oporoma in Bayelsa State into a model for education in the riverine communities. Havlik is lobbying Bayelsa Governor Silva and Education Commissioner Josephine Ezonbodur to assign teachers to the school, and is using grants, such as one for the purchase of books for the library received from the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund, to make the school functional. Havlik, who will live in Yenagoa and make frequent trips to the school, counts on a network of contacts ranging from government officials, to Joint Task Force (JTF) Commanders and the relatives of well-known militants, to assure her safety. Post recounts the conversation for what it is worth, without any attempt to glamorize Havlik or to minimize the risks she is taking. Whether she will be able to carry out her mission safely remains to be seen. End Comment.

¶2. (C) Pol-Econ Chief met January 31 with Mary Ellen Havlik, formerly Security Officer for the Canadian Embassy in Nigeria and currently Executive Director of the Daniel Igali Foundation. (Note: Daniel Igali sought refugee status in Canada in 1994 when he traveled with the Nigerian Wrestling Team to compete in the 1994 Commonwealth Games. According to Wikipedia, Igali was the 1999 World Freestyle Wrestling Champion and a 2000 Olympic Champion in wrestling. Daniel Igali is a cousin of Nigeria's Ambassador to Sweden Dr. Boladei Godknows Igali, a former Secretary to State Government of Bayelsa State. End Note) In her role as Executive Director of the Foundation, Havlik's principal task will be to get a school constructed by the foundation in Eniwarri (phonetic), a riverine community near Oporoma two hours south of the Bayelsa State capital of Yenagoa, up and running. The Igali Foundation wants the school to become a model for education in the riverine communities. The physical plant is well constructed, Havlik said, and the multi-hectare complex includes a classroom building, a library with over 80 study carrels, a gymnasium and other facilities. Although the school was constructed more than two years ago, the State has not yet assigned teachers to the facility. Despite the fact that it has not been used, the community is proud of the facility and has been successful in protecting it from vandalism, Havlik said. Oporoma is a

restive community, she said, but when a militant leader tried to locate near Eniwarri, the community was successful in chasing him away.

SSH Grant to Stock School's Library

¶3. (C) Havlik said she is grateful for the receipt of an Ambassador's Special Self-Help Grant which will allow her to equip the school's library with a stock of basic books. She is currently seeking funding from other sources with which to build on the basic collection. Havlik is lobbying Bayelsa's Governor Timipre Silva and Education Commissioner Josephine Ezonbodor to assure that teachers are assigned to the school. Because Commissioner Ezonbodor is interested in revamping the state curriculum, Havlik has helped her get in touch with Nigerians in Canada who have expertise in curriculum development.

¶4. (C) Havlik will be based in Yenagoa, but will make frequent trips to the school. Asked how she plans to assure her safety and security while working in the state, Havlik noted that her prior posting as the Canadian Embassy's Security officer provided her with numerous contacts throughout the region. (Note: While posted to the Canadian Embassy, Havlik, who is not a career diplomat, was on leave from her position with the Canadian Mounted Police. End Note) Among her contacts are JTF Commander Brigadier-General Navren Rimitsip and Spokesperson Lieutenant-Colonel Sagir Musa, as well as a host of lesser officers. In addition, her personal friends include Kingsley Kuku, Director of the Peace

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and Conflict Management Unit of the Niger Delta Development Commission, who Havlik claims may be Jomo Gbomo, an offtime spokesperson for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND); Ann-Kio Briggs, now living in Lagos, formerly spokesperson for the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), who Havlik says may be Cynthia White, sometime spokesperson for MEND; the Port Harcourt-based Honorary Canadian Consul Harcourt Aduke, and relatives of several well-known militant leaders. As a courtesy, she plans to notify the JTF and others when she travels, Havlik said. Friends keep her posted about the current security situation; they call to say things like "This is not a good week to be on the Nun River," Havlik said, naming a Bayelsa river that runs near Oporoma and empties into the Gulf of Guinea west of Brass.

¶5. (C) Comment: Post recounts this conversation with Havlik for what it is worth, and with no intent to glamorize Havlik or the risks she is taking; neither do we have any way to confirm her comments on the individuals she claims to be spokespersons for various groups. Although well-known to the Regional Security Officer and others in the Consulate community, this is only the second time Pol-Econ Chief has spoken with Havlik; the first time was at the ceremony awarding the Ambassador's Special Self-Help grants. Havlik sees her situation as different from that of other expatriates in the area, but whether she will be able to carry out her mission safely remains to be seen.

BLAIR